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SIMPLIFICATION OF GEMINATION IN THE OLD
ENGLISH WEAK VERB, CLASS I.

It is probable that a careless use of grammatical terms rather than a misconception of the true state of the case is responsible for such a statement as the following (Sievers' *Old English Grammar*, 3d ed., transl. by Cook, 405, 3; p. 309):—

"Gemination [in the pret. 1 class weak verbs] is simplified: *fyllan*, *fylde*, 'fill';—*wemman*, *wemde*, 'defile'; *cennan*, *cende*, 'beget'"

"Note 7" states that "now and then gemination is preserved in the preterite by an etymological spelling, especially in North.: L. *fyllde*, *cerrde*, etc."

Compare with this the statement made in section 404:—

"The ending of the preterite is *-de*, which is in general attached immediately to the radical syllable. The *i*-umlaut is retained.

Note 1. The *-de* arose by syncopation from prehistoric *-ida*."

These two statements are contradictory. "Simplification" of gemination necessarily means that at one time a double consonant existed. In the pret. of the weak verb, class I, however, there never was anything to cause gemination, unless one accepts Kögel's suggestion (*PBB* 9, 522) that the form of the pret. was **nasjida*, **nasjips*. This suggestion Sievers evidently does not accept, for he affirms (404, 1; cf. above) that the "prehistoric" form is *-ida*. This form is capable of producing umlaut of the radical vowel; but it works no gemination of the consonant, which has to be "simplified." In those cases where the consonant in the pret. is found to be geminated the supposition will more easily lie that the gemination is due to analogy with the infin. and with the two forms of the pres. indic. and the 2 imper., where gemination organically exists.

The same kind of error in the use of grammatical terms is frequently found in the explanation furnished for the lack of

a double consonant in the 2 and 3 sing. indic. and in the 2 sing. imper. in verbs of this same class.

"The geminated consonant is simplified in the 2 and 3 pres. indic. and in the 2 sing. imper.: *fr̥emest*, *fr̥emeþ*, *fr̥eme*." (Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 96, p. lxxv).

The low grade endings of the 2 and 3 sing. pres. indic. and the 2 sing. imper. produced umlaut, but no gemination, which has to be "simplified". Sievers does not use "simplification" here (400, 2; p. 303). He says: "These [verbs] originally geminated the final consonant of the stem in all forms of the present except the indic. 2 and 3 sing. and the imper. 2 sing. . . .",—which is a statement of fact, but no explanation at all.

In Old High German, as well as in Old Saxon (Holthausen, *Altsächsisches Elementarbuch*, 457), the verb of the first weak class exhibits the same variation between the geminated and the simple consonant: *zellu*, *zelis*, *zelit*. Braune (*Althochdeutsche Grammatik*, 358) clearly points out for Old High German what is not so exactly stated in Old English grammars: "Und auch im Praesens gibt es drei Formen, *welche kein j hatten*, nämlich die 2. 3. sing. ind. auf *-is*, *-it* und die 2 sg. imp. auf *-i*: in diesen Formen konnte auch kein Consonanten-gemination entstehen."

JAMES F. ROYSTER.

The University of North Carolina.